

24 Feb. 1969

The Honorable William P. Bundy
Assistant Secretary for East Asian and
Pacific Affairs

Situation Report

Attached per your request is an
informal wrap-up of the situation in Vietnam
as it stands at close of business in Washing-
ton on Monday, 24 February.

• George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

GAC:taw:24Feb69

LDX'd to Bundy & John Burke 1900 hours 24 Feb. 69
1 - GAC Chrono w/• att ✓

/

25 February 1969

Colonel Robert Pursley
Executive Assistant to
The Secretary of Defense

Per our 25 February conversation, attached for your information is a copy of an informal wrap-up we pulled together last night (24 February). As I indicated, we are modifying the format of our daily publication The Situation in Vietnam to include a check-list type summary resume of enemy offensive action, positive or negative (Saigon, Danang, Hue, I Corps, II Corps, III Corps, IV Corps), plus any trends we see developing or predictions warranted by the evidence. I will ensure that you receive a direct copy of this publication daily.

George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

GAC:jkl:25Feb69

Orig. - Frank Hand (inner envelope addressed to Col. Pursley) w/att
1 - GAC Chrono w/• att ✓

/-

SECRET
DX'd to John Burke and
Gundy at the Dept. of State
1900 hours this date.
Also cabled to Sec. Rogers
(State) in London who is w/Pres
on European trip(same time/dte)

24 February 1969

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Communist Offensive Activity Continues in South Vietnam

I. OVERVIEW

1. The Situation Summarized. The upsurge of enemy initiated activity which began on early 23 February with the launching of the current enemy offensive continued through the night of 24 February but at a reduced level. There were few ground contacts as the enemy utilized economy of forces tactics while employing widespread attacks by fire in an attempt to present an appearance of strength throughout South Vietnam. Available evidence indicates that the enemy plans to continue these tactics for at least several more days with larger scale ground assaults possible should an opportunity arise. The enemy's ultimate intentions are still unknown but the general emerging pattern of conservation of manpower and ammunition and the failure to commit main force units suggest that he is planning an offensive which will cover an extended period of time. The numerous harassing attacks by fire may well have covered the movement of main force units in preparation for major attacks in critical areas.

2. The Immediate Future. It is expected that attacks by fire, ambushes, and attacks on Regional Force/Popular Force elements will continue as the enemy assesses the current situation. The availability of large uncommitted forces provides the enemy with considerable tactical flexibility at this point and allows him to pose serious threats against important allied targets. Numerous reports and the disposition of enemy main force units reveal that Danang, Hoi An, Tam Ky, and Quang Ngai in I Corps are likely targets for sapper and/or ground attacks in the near future. The enemy apparently plans to maintain heavy pressure on allied outposts in the Western Highlands by attacks by fire and may elect to attack any of several, e. g., Ben Het, Dak To, Poley Kleng, Plei Mrong, Plei Djereng, or Duc Co. III Corps has been the focus of enemy attention and probably will continue to see the highest level of activity, although there are signs of increasing enemy action against targets in I Corps and western IV Corps. Given the massing of enemy forces throughout the Corps (many in forward staging areas) and reports that they would be involved in the offensive, it appears that they are either moving under the cover of the

harassing attacks or are being withheld pending a decision on the advisability of their employment. Apparently none of the Sub-Region forces have yet been committed so that the enemy retains his advance forces for a Saigon attack if he should decide to attempt assaults on the capital with his uncommitted main forces. Currently, the 5th VC Division can attack Long Binh/Bien Hoa at any time. The 9th VC Division and Sub-Region forces can move on Saigon within 24 to 48 hours with elements of the 7th NVA Division in position to move quickly on Lai Khe and Ben Cat or assume a reserve role. In the Delta, it is expected that the enemy will continue his current activities but at a diminishing scale since it is doubtful that he can continue his recent above-normal level of activity for more than a few days. Since few of the Delta VC main force units have been reported involved in the offensive, however, these forces remain a threat for the immediate future.

3. The GVN Reaction. Official and popular reaction to the enemy's offensive remains almost phlegmatic. Throughout the period of increased military activity, there has been little noticeable change in the normal attitudes of the people, apparent change in their daily routine, nor movement of the population to the larger cities as was noted during earlier offensives. Prime Minister Huong is reported to be happy with Saigon's lack of panic and business-as-usual atmosphere and to believe that the popular calm is an expression of confidence in the strength of the government. Minister of Labor Hien is reported to have said that the present attacks have only nuisance value and will be taken by the average Vietnamese as a sign of enemy weakness, not of strength. Hien claimed that after the enemy threats of revolution and wholesale onslaughts, his limited attacks would strengthen the government's position by demonstrating the GVN's ability to hold the enemy to nuisance actions.

4. Communist Objectives. The enemy's ultimate intentions are not yet clear but he continues to present a considerable threat throughout much of SVN with his uncommitted forces. He undoubtedly has acquired some immediate psychological ammunition for his propaganda mill by the flurry of attacks in almost every province but this temporarily accrued value will fade rapidly without some sort of "victory" of which to boast. Militarily, he appears thus far to have accomplished very little as all province and district capitals remain under GVN control with little real likelihood of a successful enemy seizure of any major population center. While the enemy may, through continued economy of force tactics and/or careful commitment of his forces, be able to avoid a large-scale and psychologically disastrous tactical defeat; such a strategy probably greatly reduces his chances of achieving his long-range objectives.

II. THE TACTICAL SITUATION

5. I Corps. Enemy initiated actions have continued throughout the day in I Corps, but the only really large-scale engagement is in Tien Phuoc District, Quang Tin Province, where friendly forces are reportedly engaged with two and possibly three NVA battalions. There have been no casualty reports so far. GVN security service and police informants plus documents captured prior to the current offensive make it appear that Danang can expect heavy attacks at almost any time. An informant claims that the Viet Cong V25, R20, and Q91 Bns have been committed by the Quang Da Special Zone to attack Danang. In addition, it appears that fairly large numbers of sappers have infiltrated the city to support internally any serious enemy effort to overrun the city. Farther south in Quang Ngai Province, friendly forces have been engaged with an estimated two NVA regiments 2.5 kms west of Quang Ngai and contact continues. The NVA 3rd Division and its subordinates have been located west of Quang Ngai City for several weeks and may be planning to attack the city and/or military installations in the area during the current offensive.

6. II Corps. Ben Het Special Forces Camp in western Kontum Province continues to take heavy rocket and mortar attacks, but friendly casualties remain quite low. It is possible that the heavy bombardment is the prelude to a ground assault against the camp. At last report -- 1800 (Saigon time) 24 February -- friendly forces were in contact with an unknown size enemy force four kms south of the base. The camp has been reinforced by one mobile strike force battalion and is being supported by tactical air, gunships, and artillery. Midway between Pleiku City and Kontum City, two convoys were ambushed within one-half hour of each other. No casualties or damage reports are available as of this writing. Duc Co Special Forces Camp was also hit early this morning, but damage and casualties were light. The commanding general of the US 4th Infantry Division has authorized the use of tactical air against suspected 100mm gun positions firing against friendly forces in western Kontum Province.

7. III Corps. The town of Song Be continues to receive sporadic attacks by fire, but the situation there has clearly been relieved for the present with only two minor contacts with enemy units being noted. These two contacts, both within one km of the town, were the result of friendly initiatives. According to a report from a source who has usually been reliable in such matters in the past, Song Be is slated to receive a ground attack within 72 hours. The report did not specify the beginning of this time frame. The scenario calls for some 1,000 troops of the 7th NVA Division to conduct the attack which will be preceded by mortar and rocket fire targetted against the sector headquarters. Nearby, Phuoc Binh, a district capital southwest of Song Be, received 122mm rocket fire -- the first such use of this weapon

~~SECRET~~

in this area. In Bien Hoa, workers at a US installation either did not come to work or requested to leave their jobs early because they claimed the Viet Cong were planning to infiltrate toward Bien Hoa City and would pass close to their homes north of Long Binh. At 0030 (Saigon time) on the 25th, reports indicated the movement of a small enemy force toward the III Corps Headquarters in Bien Hoa City. At 0100, observers in the city heard sounds of fighting as local forces apparently were reacting to this movement. An early morning contact at 0100 (Saigon time) 23 February in southern Tay Ninh Province resulted in 127 enemy being killed. This action occurred near the Cambodian border and was the result of an enemy attack against a US unit. Friendly losses were 15 killed and 31 wounded. A prisoner taken in the fight said both the VC 271st and 272nd regiments of the 9th VC Division were in the area at the time.

8. Capital Military District (CMD). The CMD has been quiet throughout the day with no military contact or terrorist incidents reported as of 242400 February (Saigon time).

9. IV Corps. IV Corps has been relatively quiet during the past 24 hours with no significant enemy activity noted as of 242400 February (Saigon time). Continued enemy efforts will probably be in the form of attacks by fire on selected priority targets and interdiction of lines of communication. Terrorist incidents are also a possibility.